

**PUBPOL 521.011 Introduction to Policy Writing  
Winter 2019**

**SYLLABUS**

Classroom: Steelcase Conference Room, 2120 Weill  
Dates: Each Tuesday from January 15 to February 12  
Time: 4:00 pm – 5:20 pm

Instructor: Molly Spencer  
Pronouns: she / her / hers  
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**Course Objectives**

This module's goal is to familiarize you with the norms and types of policy writing. While policy writing draws upon principles familiar to academic writing, it has its own conventions, which are rooted in the needs and practices of policy professionals. Through these five intensive classes, we believe you will acquire skills and confidence to excel in the policy writing expected of you at the Ford School and in your future career.

**Course Requirements**

For these modules to be successful, they require active student participation. I expect you to take all requirements seriously and to give us your best writing—and your best criticism. Requirements include:

- Completion of three writing assignments: stakeholder memo, strategy memo, op-ed.
- Active participation, which includes a) critiquing your peers' written work; b) attendance and punctuality; c) volunteering your ideas.

Failure to meet these requirements will result in an “unsatisfactory” course grade.

**Workshop, Critiques, and Instructor Feedback**

*Workshop*

You will write three short papers for 521: a stakeholder memo, a strategy memo, and an op-ed. Each of you will be workshopped by the class one time—in other words, for each of you, one of these three papers will be workshopped in class. When it is your turn to be workshopped, you will email your assignment to the class in advance **by 4PM on the Friday before workshop**. You will also upload a copy to Canvas for

purposes of my record-keeping. When your peers come to class on the day of your workshop, they will have read and critiqued your work and will be prepared to discuss it.

Please follow these guidelines for formatting your assignments:

- Name your assignment files **LastnameFirstname-AssignmentName.doc**; *example*: MollySpencer-StrategyMemo.doc.
- Double space and paginate
- Include your name and a word count on the first page of the document

### *Critiques*

You will write a critique and provide line edits for each of the papers workshopped in class (except your own). It should go without saying that the aim of these workshops and critiques is to encourage rather than discourage. That doesn't mean you should check your honest appraisal. As opposed to generic praise, you should give thoughtful, constructive criticism that engages with the author's ideas, intent, and words as they appear on the page.

A **written critique** should consist of roughly three single-spaced, typed paragraphs and should include the following:

- A few sentences explaining what, specifically, you admired about the work and why.
- "Big picture" questions or comments: What didn't you understand? What felt poorly supported? What was organizationally ineffective?
- Specific suggestions for addressing your concerns.

You can indicate your **line edits** (style or sentence-level issues, corrections, etc.) directly in the document, by notation if using a hard copy, or by using Track Changes if working in the electronic file. You will turn these in directly to your classmate; they do not have to be turned in to me on Canvas.

Please bring a hard copy of your written critique to class, *and* submit an electronic copy of your written critique to Canvas **before the start of class**. If you're making line edits in an electronic file rather than on hard copy, you will need to e-mail your line edits to the person being workshopped **before the start of class**. At the end of the workshop, you will hand your critiques (both your hard copy written critique and your line edits, if on hard copy) to the student being workshopped.

### *Instructor Feedback*

You will receive detailed written feedback from me on the assignment that you submit for workshop. For the other two assignments, I encourage you to set up a 30-minute appointment with me to discuss the work further. I recommend doing this soon after you turn in each document. You can make an appointment by going to <http://fordschool.umich.edu/writing-center/> and signing up during my regular appointment hours. If none of my appointment times work for you, let me know and we'll find a time that does.

### **Course Content**

These modules will introduce you to three genres of policy writing: the *stakeholder memo*, the *strategy memo*, and the *op-ed*. Before we write and critique these genres ourselves, we will examine different approaches and strategies that students and professionals have adopted for each type of document.

Each act of writing involves informed choices that you, the writer, must negotiate. What makes for an effective opening? When and where and how can we amplify our voice to persuade or educate our readers? How can arguments work most successfully? How might we develop greater stylistic precision? What are strategies that help us write as clearly and concisely as possible? We believe you'll gain a better sense of how to answer these questions in your own work by taking this course.

## **Course Assignments/Due Dates**

### Class #1 – Tuesday, January 15

*Topic: Stakeholder Memos*

- Policy writing norms
- Stakeholder memo discussion
- Assign volunteers to workshop schedule

*Homework to be completed before 1/22:*

- *Re-read and annotate sample stakeholder memos*
- *Review line editing principles (“A Guide to Clarity and Concision”)*
- *Write critique of Volunteer #1’s stakeholder memo and upload to Canvas; turn in line edits*

### Class #2 – Tuesday, January 22

*Topic: Style and Voice in Policy Writing*

- Practice workshop of stakeholder memos
- Workshop of Volunteer #1’s stakeholder memo: \_\_\_\_\_
- Line editing review and exercises

*Homework to be completed before 1/29:*

- *Write critique of Volunteer #2’s stakeholder memo and upload to Canvas; turn in line edits*
- *Complete stakeholder memo (except Volunteer #1) and upload to Canvas*
- *Read and annotate example strategy memos*

### Class #3 – Tuesday, January 29

**DUE: Stakeholder Memo (Assignment #1)**

*Topic: Stakeholder Memo Wrap-up and Strategy Memos*

- Workshop Volunteer #2’s stakeholder memo: \_\_\_\_\_
- Strategy memo discussion

*Homework to be completed before 2/5:*

- *Write critique of Volunteers’ #3 and #4 strategy memos and upload to Canvas; turn in line edits*
- *Complete strategy memo and upload to Canvas*
- *Read and annotate op-ed handouts*

### Class #4 – Tuesday, February 5

**DUE: Strategy Memo (Assignment #2)**

*Topics: Strategy Memo Wrap-up and Op-Eds*

- Workshop Volunteers’ #3 and #4 strategy memos: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_
- Op-ed discussion

Homework to be completed before 2/12:

- Write critiques of Volunteers' #5 and #6 op-eds and upload to Canvas; turn in line edits
- Complete op-ed and upload to Canvas

Class #5 – Tuesday 2/12

**DUE: The Op-Ed (Assignment #3)**

Topics: Op-Eds and Course Wrap-up

- Workshop Volunteers' #5 and #6 op-eds: \_\_\_\_\_ , \_\_\_\_\_
- Course Wrap-up

*This syllabus and its contents are subject to change. I will announce any changes in class and update Canvas accordingly.*

### **FORD SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY INCLUSIVITY STATEMENT**

Members of the Ford School community represent a rich variety of backgrounds and perspectives. We are committed to providing an atmosphere for learning that respects diversity. While working together to build this community we ask all members to:

- share their unique experiences, values, and beliefs
- be open to the views of others
- honor the uniqueness of their colleagues
- appreciate the opportunity that we have to learn from each other in this community
- value one another's opinions and communicate in a respectful manner
- keep confidential discussions that the community has of a personal (or professional) nature
- use this opportunity together to discuss ways in which we can create an inclusive environment in Ford classes and across the UM community

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** If you believe you need an accommodation for a disability, please let your instructor know at your earliest convenience. Some aspects of courses may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make your instructor aware of your needs, they can work with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office to help determine appropriate academic accommodations. Any information you provide will be treated as private and confidential.

**Student Mental Health and Well-Being Resources:** The University of Michigan is committed to advancing the mental health and wellbeing of its students. We acknowledge that a variety of issues, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, and depression, directly impacts students' academic performance. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of support, services are available. For help, contact [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) (CAPS) and/or [University Health Service](#) (UHS). For a listing of other mental health resources available on and off campus, visit: <http://umich.edu/~mhealth/>

**Please review additional information and policies regarding academic expectations and resources at the Ford School of Public Policy at this link:**  
<http://fordschool.umich.edu/academics/expectations>